

UNITED STATES FIGHTS FOR CUBAN AUTONOMY.

Minister Draper Is Quoted as Saying This Government Would Influence the Islanders to Accept Spain's Offer.

COMPETITOR PRISONERS TO BE TRIED TO-DAY.

Ona Melton and the Other American Citizens to Be Court-Martialed, Despite Our Protest, After Nineteen Months' Imprisonment.

By Luigi Ferrai.
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Rome, Nov. 7.—The Azenzia Libera says United States Minister Draper declared to the Visconde that the United States will strain tolerance to the last limits, and will use its utmost efforts to induce Cubans to accept autonomy. Nevertheless the influence of the United States over the insurgents is very problematic.

COMPETITOR CREW ON TRIAL TO-DAY.

Spain Violates Treaty Rights by a Court-Martial.

Morgan on the Melton Case.

Whether there are seventy-four prisoners in Cuba or 74,000, or whether it is one in the person of Ona Melton, this Arkansas youth, the flag of the United States, if it refuses to shelter him, is a DISGRACED FLAG. — Senator Morgan, of Alabama, in a speech before the Senate, April 7, 1897.

What Will the United States Do?

This is the Competitor case in brief: The Spanish Government has held for nineteen months in a Cuban prison at least two Americans seized on board a vessel which claimed to be flying the flag of the United States, which had been fired upon and searched by a Spanish battle ship for engaging in filibustering. The men were sentenced to death by a drumhead court-martial, but their execution was delayed to give the home Government in Spain time to review the case. A new trial was ordered. It begins in Havana to-day. If the first sentence is approved, the right to search American vessels insisted upon and the prisoners ordered to be shot, what will this Government do?

After nearly nineteen months of imprisonment the trial of the crew of the schooner Competitor begins in Havana to-day.

After playing a game of cat and mouse with the six men who were captured on board this ship since April 26, 1896, after having once before set aside the sentence of death pronounced by a drumhead court-martial, setting under a new trial by Weyler, Spain now orders a new trial by a court-martial which is to convene this morning.

Among the prisoners is one whose American citizenship has never for a moment been questioned—Ona Melton, an Arkansas youth, who became a member of the Competitor expedition as a newspaper correspondent. He never bore arms against Spain nor had he any purpose more than reporting the war from the Cuban camp. He has been made a prisoner of war. When the first summary Spanish court-martial considered the case he was sentenced to death with the others. His case more than any of the others has excited the interest of the people of the United States from two Administrations toward Spain.

This Competitor incident may prove the rock upon which the policy of national forbearance will go to pieces. It may be the issue out of which a war with Spain will grow. Consul-General Fitzhugh Lee has received instructions from the State Department, as the Journal learned yesterday, to take vigorous steps in case these prisoners are found guilty and the death sentence imposed, to see to it that the men are not secretly executed.

That the verdict of to-day's court-martial will call for the death of the prisoners, few who have followed the history of this Cuban case can doubt. That such a sentence will ever be executed, none believes. Spain, to all appearance, intends to make the excuse for what is termed in this instance, a "grand stand play." A dramatic extension of clemency at the last moment, that Government believes, will lull America into repose again, and appease the anger of the people of the United States.

But Spain proposes another move, which will prove even a more dangerous firebrand than the execution of the Competitor crew. That nation has threatened to institute, by the verdict in this case, the right to search vessels of the United States, a determination to which the people of the United States will never listen for a moment.

According to the testimony of those on board the Competitor at the time the vessel was fired upon and searched by the officers of a Spanish war launch, she was beyond the three-mile limit and flying the American flag.

First Filibuster Caught.

The Competitor was the first vessel caught in filibustering. On April 20, 1896, she lay alongside a dock at Key West. Early in the evening of that day the inspector on duty reported that Cubans had been going aboard the schooner with large bundles, and had not been seen to come ashore again. When this reached the ears of the Spanish Consul, he dispatched a messenger to the revenue cutter Winona, at anchor in the harbor, and notified her commander of the occurrence.

Before this messenger reached the Winona the Competitor had quietly slipped her ways, except by the dark revenue cutter, when there were no signs of life on board, and put straight to sea. The wind was so light that the commander of the revenue cutter waited until morning before looking for the schooner. Next day the Winona reached the Competitor, and the men were found her drifting aimlessly with the current in the gulf, and kept her in sight. Under cover of darkness the Competitor changed her course, dodged through

the Bahia channel, and, evading her pursuer, proceeded to Cape Sable, at the extreme southern point of the Florida peninsula, where, by previous agreement, General Monzon and the remainder of his filibustering party awaited her arrival. There the schooner was seized with them the arms and ammunition previously landed from the Florida Keys to Reconocimiento light, they set sail for the Cuban coast, which was reached on April 26. On the Cuban coast, near the little port of Baracoa, about sixty miles west of Havana, on the north coast of the Province of Pinar del Rio, the Competitor and her crew came to grief.

There the schooner was seized by the Spanish war launch Menesajera. Nearly all of the thirty filibusters on board had landed when the Menesajera overhauled the Competitor; others tried to swim ashore. Of these were killed, Alfred Laborde, captain of the vessel, was captured on the reef he had managed to reach. Five others—Ona Melton, a correspondent of the Jacksonville Times Union; William Gilder, an Englishman; but Captain W. L. Leavitt, an Englishman—remained on the schooner, were captured and taken to Havana.

These men were tried and sentenced to be shot. The immediate and emphatic protest raised in this country by the Journal's publication of this news compelled the United States Government to interpose. The protest was heeded by Spain and finally a new trial ordered.

Treaty Rights Violated. The demand of the United States has been that the treaty rights of the American prisoners shall not be violated. The treaty provisions of 1877 are plain. They declare:

No citizen of the United States, residing in Spain, her adjacent islands, or her ultramarine possessions, shall be charged with acts of rebellion, or charged with conspiracy against the institutions, the public security, the integrity of the territory, or against the supreme authority, or with any other crime whatsoever, shall be subject to trial by any exceptional tribunal, but shall be tried by the ordinary jurisdiction, except in the case of being captured with arms in hand.

Next it is provided specifically that, even if those who are taken with arms in hand are seized by an armed force, they must be delivered to the authorities of the civil authorities. Again, even those taken with arms in hand are to be tried by the ordinary jurisdiction, and are to be allowed to employ attorneys and to have a copy of the accusation against them and a list of the Government's witnesses. These are to be examined in the presence of the accused and his attorney, who are to have the right to compel witnesses of their own to appear and give testimony on oath. Other elaborate provisions are made to secure the rights of the accused.

It is made perfectly clear from these citations that persons who are American citizens cannot be lawfully tried by a Spanish court-martial, unless captured with arms in their hands. The last part of the treaty is taken in its wider meaning and not in that of actually grasping weapons.

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Ona Melton.

shail appears to be most anxious to give some speedy proof of his merciful intentions in individual instances and to secure the approbation of the United States. These actions are commendable, but they imply no sacrifice on the part of Spain. To prove Spanish sincerity he must do far more than release these few victims of Weyler's petty spite.

Thousands of pacifics are still starving, but so far the authorities are doing nothing to mitigate that evil. Another matter, the delinquency of which forbids open discussion, is the merciless traffic in young girls still persisted in among the Spanish officers. Weyler encouraged it. Blanco should take instant measures to eradicate the evil. To Havana these girls of tender age are brought from the country and introduced into houses of ill fame. Their parents are starving or dead, and the children are thus helpless in the clutches of the human monsters.

Havana itself is a sink of cosmopolitan filth into which the vices of every corner of the world are introduced and practiced with impunity.

If you're in doubt just what to do, Don't hesitate. But use the Journal "wants" and you won't have to wait.

SHOULD ROB A GRAVE.

Continued from First Page.

bear publication. The body had evidently been split by a cleaver or a sharp axe, and the wounds inflicted in the senseless flesh had rough edges, as if the desire had been to inflict on the clay a ghastly vengeance. Some of the organs were entirely missing.

Two pieces of maul, torn from the garments of the dead woman, had been fastened to the feet, and with this the body had been dragged feet foremost to its hiding place. The long hair of the dead woman was strewn over the leaves, and some of it had been caught in the briars which lay in the path.

Ready to Lash the Ghosts.

One man in the crowd declared that he would head a lynching party if the perpetrators of the crime could be discovered, and there were enough responses to make it certain that should the spoliators be discovered and arrested the police will have their hands full.

The crowd which looked upon the mutilated body, including even the town police themselves, were so shocked at the find that for several seconds they stood speechless.

Chief of Police Bullock and Mayor Payne were among the first to recover presence of mind, and ordered a vehicle sent for. The crowd was ordered away and the body left under guard until an undertaker's wagon, accompanied by several physicians, appeared.

The casket was lifted from its place beside the grave and brought to the woods and the body placed in it. The body was reburied temporarily.

None of the relatives of the dead woman appeared on the scene. A Journal representative called at the house of Benjamin Tilton, but the place was closed, and no body could be found. It is said that nobody of the family are out of town. None of them have been found up to a late hour to-night.

Blame Claim to Have a Clue.

At 11 o'clock to-night the police admit that they have a clue, but refuse to state the nature of it. Detectives have been placed on the case, and it is stated that the officers have some startling information, and that it is probable arrests will be made to-morrow.

It is stated that two men have been visitors at the cemetery within the past week on several occasions. No one has been found as yet who is able to identify them. The sexton thinks he could identify all the persons who have been in the burying ground during the past few weeks, and he has given several names to the police as possible clues.

The community is much aroused over the affair. Even at the late hour when the crime seems to have been committed the robbers and mutilators ran every chance of discovery, for a lantern could easily have been seen from the street which runs along the front of the cemetery. How near the place is to the residences in the neighborhood may be judged of from the vividness with which James Bell describes what he saw. It was a daring outrage in the extreme.

It is believed that the murderers returned to the grave after they were certain Bell had retired and proceeded with their work between that time and daylight. The men were too far away, however, for Bell to offer any accurate description of the men. He says that he can not give any idea either of their size or age, as the night, as has been said, was quite dark, and the grave is some distance from his house.

Do You Want to Live

and have your throat cut or your head cut off? Change of climate is your remedy. Write to E. J. Burnett, 377 Broadway, N. Y.

BLANCO PLANNING CUBAN REFORMS.

Captain-General Taking Autonomists Into His Confidence.

By George Clark Musgrave.

(Copyright, 1897, by W. R. Hearst.)

Havana, Nov. 6, via Key West, Fla., Nov. 7.—General Blanco has been actively employed in formulating plans for the speedy introduction of autonomy in Cuba, and has spent many hours in consultation with

Senator Jose Galvez, the leader of the autonomist party. He has already nominated Senator Jose Bruget, a prominent lawyer here, as Civil Governor of Havana. Properly, and on Monday will appoint other autonomists of prominence to administer in Pinar del Rio, Matanzas and Santa Clara provinces. The constitutionalists and ultra-Spaniards are vigorously opposing any drastic measures to end the reconcentration, and Blanco himself realizes that this will be his most difficult task, though he issued such a sanguine manifesto on Thursday.

General Pando, when approached on the subject, says evasively that now the pacific settlements could not be done away with, but the zones of cultivation would be extended in order that the starving could raise food, and under military protection all attempts to obstruct would be asked to fortify their plantations and resume cultivation. It is thus difficult to see in what way the horrible condition of the pacifics will be materially altered.

The Captain-General is gradually getting disillusioned as to the true condition of the insurgents, and must already feel relieved that he took a lesson from Weyler's blunder, and was non-committal as to the time in which he could end the war. He is also made by the press to be a ruler, and that especially his sugar industry is crippled hopelessly by reason of ruined machinery, the machinery being wrecked and the machinery being wrecked and the machinery being wrecked.

What Senator Galvez Says.

I saw Senator Galvez, the autonomist leader, yesterday on his return from a conference at the palace. He is the oldest autonomist in the Antilles, and for fifteen years has been prominently connected with the Cuban party. During the ten years war he was a leader in the deputations that implored self-government from Spain all during the war. For his temerity he was granted to prison and his estates confiscated. It, indeed, indicates the change of Spain's attitude at the present time.

I tried to obtain from Senator Galvez the exact meaning of his attitude in introducing autonomous government. He said it was an impossibility. It would have to be done by slow degrees. "I do not believe," he added, "that the instant we should accept it and we have not to introduce the reforms to prove the sincerity of the new government and give proof of its advantages. All this will take time, but ultimately I am assured that large numbers of Cubans in arms will come in. There will be a general amnesty, and if the leaders still wish to retain the struggle, they will find their forces reduced and forced to accept a general amnesty. The liberty we have dreamed of for years and Cuba will respect Spain as the English colonies respect their mother country. We have always held that a people respected should govern themselves."

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ROOSEVELT DEMANDS MORE BATTLE SHIPS.

A Strong Navy the Best Possible Assurance Against the Risk and Danger of War.

FORTS ABOUT NEW YORK WOULD BE USELESS.

All That Could Be Built Could Not Prevent a Hostile Squadron from Blockading the Port and Ruining Its Commerce.

Washington, Nov. 7.—Theodore Roosevelt, in his capacity of Assistant Secretary of the Navy, entertains strong views on the subject of increasing the number of battle ships, and he has no hesitation in expressing them whenever the occasion requires. He boldly declares that he believes the only efficient defense is a formidable fighting navy of battle ships and torpedo boats. If Congress accepts his recommendation this winter the appropriations for the construction of battle ships will be more liberal than those provided in the last annual appropriation for the navy.

Assistant Secretary Roosevelt, if given an opportunity to appear before the Committee on Naval Affairs in the House of Representatives, which has charge of the Naval Appropriation bill, might convince some of the anti-naval members of the importance of strengthening our naval establishment.

The Congressional Record will show that, notwithstanding all the war talk which has been indulged in by both the House and Senate during the past few years, when it comes to voting for naval appropriations those members of Congress who daily declare war against Spain, England, Germany, Japan or other countries are generally found among the opponents of liberal appropriations for the army and navy.

These are the sentiments which Mr. Roosevelt expressed to the Journal to-day: "I hope to see bodies like the Chamber of Commerce of New York City, representing the commercial interests of the country, just as strong in their support of a powerful fighting navy, from a commercial standpoint, as men who are solely interested in the honor of the flag. I know the gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce will approve of a navy for patriotic reasons, too, but in addition they would approve of it as the best possible assurance against the risk of war and against the danger that would be caused by war."

In the delivery of these sentiments Mr. Roosevelt threw some of his characteristic vigor. "Should war occur," he continued, "the navy is not only the guardian of national honor, but the surest guarantee of peace. It is in readiness for war; not in war itself, unless it is demanded by national interest alone. The possession of a first-class navy will not tend, and in the past never has tended, to make this country go to war; on the contrary, it will tend to preserve peace, but in readiness for war; not in war itself, unless it is demanded by national interest alone."

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